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Remarks/Arguments

The present amendment is in response to the Office Action mailed November 3, 2003, in which Claims 1-21 were rejected. Applicant has thoroughly reviewed the outstanding Office Action including the Examiner's remarks and the references cited therein. The following remarks are believed to be fully responsive to the Office Action and, when coupled with the amendments made herein, are believed to render all claims at issue patentably distinguishable over the cited references.

Claims 10, 11 and 16 are amended herein. No claims are cancelled.
Accordingly, Claims 1-21 are pending.

All the changes are made for clarification and are based on the application and drawings as originally filed. It is respectfully submitted that no new matter is added.

Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration in light of the above amendments and the following remarks.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. 112

According to the Office Action, Claim 16 is being rejected as containing subject matter which was not described in the specification in such a way as to enable one skilled in the art to which it pertains, or with which it is most nearly connected, to make and/or use the invention. Applicant has clarified this claim by the above amendment, and therefore requests that this rejection be withdrawn.

With respect to Claim 10, the Examiner rejected this claim as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. Applicant has clarified this claim by the above amendment, and therefore requests that this rejection be withdrawn.

As a result of the clarifying amendment to Claim 10 discussed above, Claim 11, which is dependent on Claim 10, has been amended so that it is in acceptable form.

Accordingly, in view of the amendments, applicant respectfully requests the rejections under 35 U.S.C. 112 to be withdrawn.

Response to Arguments

In its February 3, 2004 response to the Final Office Action, Applicant submitted remarks pointing out several distinctions between the invention of claim 1 and the teachings of the cited Onozaki, Hofbauer and Takubo patents. Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of these remarks as well as the following comments and favorable consideration of each of the pending claims. Applicant's attorney would greatly appreciate the opportunity to discuss these remarks and the pending claims with the Examiner prior to issuance of an office action.

Applicant respectfully submits that Onozaki does not disclose "the channels tapering downwardly from the first end and the second end towards an accumulation area (see Figure 1 flat circular portion 28)". The channels disclosed in Onozaki do not extend downwardly from the first end and the second end to the flat circular portion 28 as the Examiner has indicated. As seen in Figure 2 of Onozaki, the channels extending from the end of the "thinner area" (proximate number 24 of Figure 2) extend in an upward direction toward both the flat circular portion which is not numbered and the flat circular portion 28. Claim 1 requires that the channels taper downwardly from both ends (23 and 24 in the Onozaki reference) towards the accumulation area. Applicant respectfully submits that, because the channels in Onozaki taper upwardly from one of

the ends (specifically end 24), Onozaki not only does not disclose, but in fact teaches away from, the invention as claimed by Applicant.

Applicant respectfully submits that Claim 1 is allowable since Onozaki does not disclose the limitations of Claim 1. As such, all of the dependent claims from Claim 1 should also be allowable.

Applicant respectfully requests favorable consideration of each of the pending claims in view of the above remarks. Again, Applicant's attorney would greatly appreciate the opportunity to discuss these remarks and the pending claims with the Examiner prior to issuance of an Office Action.

Respectfully submitted,



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